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SUBJECT: Jordan Re-engaging with Israel, U.S. on TRIDE
Development Fund

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1. (SBU) Summary: Representatives from Jordan, Israel and the United States met in Amman on February 16 to discuss collaboration under the Trilateral Industrial Research and Development fund (TRIDE). Jordan is now ready to re-engage on TRIDE. Each of the three countries has committed one-third of a million dollars for a new round of TRIDE grants. End summary.

Consultation Meeting Takes Place in Amman

2. (SBU) Then-Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) Secretary General Dr. Tayseer Smadi hosted the TRIDE meeting at MOPIC's offices on February 16. Dr. Smadi, promoted to Minister on February 20, restated Jordan's commitment to providing USD 330,000 in funding for TRIDE. Smadi said that the GOJ is firmly committed to TRIDE and wants to move forward. He emphasized the need for outreach into the corporate world to promote TRIDE projects, for good communication between TRIDE partners, and for sustainability, in other words profitable projects. He said that the GOJ wants to be an active participant because of the benefits that TRIDE will bring to Jordanian companies and the country's scientific and economic development.

Background

3. (U) TRIDE is a Peace Process pilot project begun in 1996 to promote joint industrial R&D projects between Jordan, Israel and the United States. TRIDE funded three projects in the late 1990's but became dormant when the second intifada started. Israel, Jordan and the United States each contributed USD 0.3 million to the initial pilot phase.

4. (SBU) In a November 16, 2004 meeting in Washington, then-MOPIC Minister Bassem Awadallah told NEA/REA Senior Advisor for S&T Chuck Lawson that the Jordanian Cabinet had approved a second tranche of funding (USD 330,000) for TRIDE and was ready to re-engage. The Cabinet also designated MOPIC as the new point of contact for TRIDE. In the initial phase, the President of the Royal Scientific Society was the Jordanian member of the Executive Committee and the Society was responsible for technical reviews. At the February 16 meeting in Amman, then-SG Smadi said the Secretary General of MOPIC would be the Jordanian member of the TRIDE Executive Committee. The Director for Industrial Development in the Ministry of Trade will be responsible for technical reviews of proposed projects.

Solid Projects Needed for Sustainability

5. (SBU) In the February 16 meeting, Israeli BIRD Executive Director Dov Hershberg and Program Director Uri Attir gave a presentation on the mechanisms of TRIDE and emphasized the need for commercially viable projects. (Note: BIRD is the Israeli-U.S. Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation. BIRD staff provides administrative support to TRIDE. End note). The TRIDE representatives of each country will play an active role in matchmaking Jordanian, Israeli and American companies, they said. Using the BIRD Foundation to administer TRIDE will capitalize on BIRD's experience in managing international R&D projects and will cut expenses by using an existing administrative resource.

Suggestion for Expanding TRIDE: 3 year, \$10 Million Program

6. (SBU) BIRD Executive Director Hershberg said that a commitment totaling USD 10 million, shared equally between Jordan, the United States and Israel, would enable TRIDE to offer meaningful support. He said that having a typical grant of USD 600,000 per project and an average of five projects per year would create a ripple effect that will draw global companies to invest in similar business opportunities. (Comment: None of the three countries has yet committed funds for an expanded TRIDE effort. Smadi stated that Jordan was likely to seek donor assistance for any expanded funding effort. End comment).

Participants

17. (SBU) JORDAN

-- Dr. Tayseer Smadi, then-Secretary General, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
-- Wissam Akroush, staff, Industrial Development Department, Ministry of Trade and Industry
-- Amer Hadidi former TRIDE contact and Director of Industrial Development at Ministry of Trade and Industry, now Chief Executive of Public Sector Reform Administration at the Ministry of State for Public Sector Reform

ISRAEL

-- Dov Hershberg, Executive Director, Bi-National Industrial R&D Foundation (BIRD)
-- Uri Attir, Program Director, BIRD
-- Ilan Baruch, Head of Middle Eastern Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
-- Daniel Nevo, Deputy Chief of Mission, Israeli Embassy in Amman

UNITED STATES

-- Robert Tansey, Environment, Science, Technology and Health (ESTH) Officer, Embassy Tel Aviv
-- Greg Lawless, Econoff, Embassy Amman
-- Rana Safadi, ESTH Specialist, Embassy Amman

18. (SBU) The next steps are to identify a project before the executive committee meeting (TBD) and begin publicizing TRIDE. Smadi agreed to check the mechanics of transferring Jordan's contribution to the TRIDE fund.

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